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CHRISTIAN MOURNING.

A

FUNERAL DISCOURSE,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

MRS. SARAH HIBBEN,

CONSORT OF

Col. JAMES HIBBEN, Sen.

ON THE 26th JULY,

1827.

BY A. W. LELAND, D. D.

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FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

1 THESS. IV. 13.

"That ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope."

CHRISTIANS in affliction greatly need spiritual consolation. Their hearts are so intenerated by the influence of grace, divested of callous selfishness, and imbued with so exquisite a sympathy; that the sorrows of life come upon them with an aggravated severity. They cannot, like others, find a solace for their woes, by repairing to the sources of worldly comfort—be consoled by the heartless maxims of philosophy—nor diverted from their pains by the treacherous inticements of business or pleasure.—They are, therefore, shut up to the relief which is afforded by religion. They must be comforted by the word of God, or remain inconsolable. Nor will the billows of grief cease to overwhelm them, until the voice divine is heard, saying, *Peace, be still.*

To meet this peculiar exigency there is a blessed provision in the Bible. There are presented rich

treasures of comfort to refresh the fainting spirits of believers: there they are directed to their compassionate High Priest, who is touched with a feeling of their infirmities: and there they see that they are smitten—not by the vengeful sword of wrath—but by the chastening rod of a Father's love. Through whatever dark and trying scenes they may be called to pass, the Bible will always afford the means of binding up the broken heart, and pouring the oil of joy into the wounded spirit.

Especially when death approaches with all his terrours, either to remove the desire of their eyes with a stroke, or to conduct themselves down to the grave, the real followers of the Redeemer find in the Gospel an unfailing support, a strong consolation. It is just there—where earthly helpers are powerless, and the lights of worldly hope are utterly quenched—that Christianity unveils her brightest prospects, and causes her richest blessings to cluster round the gloomy entrance of Eternity.

In unison with this general design of the sacred writings, it is the definite object of the Apostle, in the passage before us, to assuage the sorrows and mitigate the anguish which must be caused by the death of the truly pious.

Until we are taught by bitter experience, we are prone to imagine that it requires but little resignation calmly to consign to the grave, the bodies of those who, we feel assured, are prepared for Heaven. But the trial painfully convinces us, that such soothing persuasions were wholly delusive. There is not indeed that shuddering horrour, which is excited by

the death of an impenitent sinner—still the removal of an eminent Saint, generally overwhelms survivors in grief and anguish. All the graces of the Spirit, all the lovely traits of character, which inspire confidence in a happy transition to glory, do necessarily render the loss more severe, and inflict the keener pangs upon mourning relatives. For whoever is ripe for heaven, is also a most precious blessing upon earth. Whoever is meet for the inheritance of the saints above, must eminently adorn the church below. And whoever is prepared to shine as the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever, must be a light of the world, whose removal must occasion deep gloom and bitter lamentation.

It is therefore a most trying dispensation to Christians, when the pillars in the church fall—when their guides, their models, their kind counsellors and sympathyzing comforters are removed by death. A feeling of desolateness and abandonment, oppresses their spirits. They are ready to exclaim, is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow!—lover and friend hast thou put far from me and my acquaintance into darkness!

It is to sustain the followers of Jesus, when sinking into such deep waters, that the Divine Spirit addresses to them such blessed words of peace and comfort, as are now before us. To cheer their desponding hearts, and despel such dark distressful views, he unfolds to their grief-dimmed eyes, scenes of enrapturing brightness and cloudless glory. He does not sternly rebuke nor forbid the heart breaking sorrow of the bereaved. The Gospel inspires no stoi-

cal apathy. Its spirit is tender and affectionate. When our Heavenly Father chastens his children, he designs that they shall severely feel his rod. When he removes the dearest objects of their love, he means that they shall mourn. Such afflictions cannot be properly improved, cannot accomplish the gracious purposes for which they are sent, unless the fountains of the heart are broken up, and the affections painfully moved. Jesus wept at the grave of his friend; and all who possess the spirit of Jesus may weep at the graves of their friends. While Christianity enables its votaries to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus, to cut off a right arm or pluck out a right eye, if duty demand the sacrifice, and to submit with unwavering firmness, to the fires of martyrdom, rather than betray or deny their Lord; at the same time it endues them with the meekness and humility of a little child, teaches them to weep with those who weep, and renders them tremblingly alive to all the griefs and pains of this mortal life.

The language of our text, therefore, does not blame nor repress the sorrows of the afflicted; but merely dissuades them from an inconsolable, an immoderate grief, which is shown to be evidently inconsistent with the hopes and prospects of the Gospel. They are cautioned not to sorrow even as others who have no hope. An allusion is here made to heathens, whose minds are shrouded in utter darkness respecting a future state. To their view the grave is enveloped in impenetrable gloom, and death appears the merciless destroyer of all their hopes and all their enjoyments. When from such, the dearest

objects of affection, the treasures of their souls, are torn away, and consigned to the tomb, their hearts are broken, the desolation of their bosoms is complete. They mourn without hope. Their night of sorrow expects no morning. Their joys are buried to rise no more. It is not surprising, therefore, that the grief of bereaved pagans leads to scenes of such frantick violence. That they should cry out in bitter lamentation, tear their hair, beat their breasts, and wound their flesh with instruments of torture. Nor is it at all wonderful, that they should sometimes insist upon being buried alive in the grave with the beloved body; or cast themselves headlong into the flaming pile in which it is consumed. All this is perfectly natural. Their loved ones are dead. The endeared forms, on which their hearts doated, are sinking into corruption. No visions of a blessed resurrection cheer them. No voice of heavenly mercy breaks the dread silence of the grave. All is dark and comfortless. They sorrow as those who have no hope. Not such should be the mourning of the followers of Jesus, at the departure of their pious friends. They can view death, not as a terrible foe, but a messenger of love. They can contemplate the grave, not as the horrible cavern of despair, but as the bed of safe and calm repose. The light of immortal hope sheds a radiance upon the dark valley, which becomes, to the eye of faith, the vestibule to the temple of a new and nobler existence. The dear friends, whose departure they deplore, are not lost, are not the victims of a direful calamity. No, they have just begun to live, just shaken off the burdens

of mortality, the clogs and fetters of the flesh, have just achieved a final and triumphant victory over sin and Satan; and have just commenced with unspeakable rapture, a blissful career of holy joys, in which they shall go on rising, refining, brightening and glorifying for ever.

Such considerations afford abundant reasons why our grief at the decease of believers, far from being excessive and inconsolable, should be mingled with devout thankfulness, and moderated by an humble resignation.

In order, therefore, to produce, in the distressed minds of disconsolate mourners, this holy calm, this sweet assurance that all is well, the Apostle draws aside the vail, and discloses so much of the state of departed saints, as is sufficient to despel every fear and hush every murmur. He carries the torch of revelation down into the dark cavern of the dead, and bids us not tremble, for there is nothing terrible there, but all is peace.

Such comforting portions of the word of God are peculiarly precious, are indispensably necessary to those who are cast down into deep affliction. Without such a solace, the heart would burst with anguish. And even with all these sources of light and comfort, christians are often overwhelmed with a grief which refuses consolation. When the king of terrours invades our sanctuary, tears down our whole fabrick of happiness, rends from our embraces the dearest object of our love, and turns the beautiful garden of our delights, into a waste, cheerless desert; without divine support the heart must be entirely crushed.

It requires a strong and lively faith, and deep spirituality, to preserve any degree of sensible comfort, any real unfeigned acquiescence in the Divine will. We may be well persuaded that our pious friends were prepared to die, and that in mercy they are removed from all evil. But oh, it is hard to feel that such sufferings, as we see them endure, that such fearful changes, as we see them passing through, can be the tokens of their heavenly Father's love. All that is agonizing in disease—all that is terrible in the last struggles of dissolving nature, is present to our sight. Whereas the blessedness of the departed is only perceived by faith. And far more deeply are we affected by objects of sight, than by those of faith. We can see the prophet surrounded by his deadly foes—but we cannot see the mountains covered with chariots of fire for his safeguard. We can see Lazarus expiring in famine, unsheltered and forlorn—but we cannot see the bright convoy of Angels, waiting to escort his redeemed spirit to the highest heaven.

Thus when we behold a dear Christain friend—bearing the blessed image of Jesus, endeared to us by every thing lovely, kind and affectionate—whose life has been spent in piety to God, and benevolence to all around—on the bed of pain and death—tortured by immitigable disease—wasted by consuming anguish—unrelieved by all the efforts of skill, all the fervency of prayer—we sink down in irrepressible grief, and tremblingly ask: hath God forgotten to be gracious? is his mercy clean gone for ever? We are tempted to feel as if the dear saint was abandoned to the power of the enemy. This painful impression arises

from the fact, that we do not see all. We do not see the Angel of the Covenant sustaining the throbbing head—softening the dying pillow. We do not see the everlasting arms put under the feeble frame, nor the oil of joy which is poured into the sinking spirit. We do not see the mansion which is preparing, nor the shining hosts which are waiting, to welcome the heir of glory to the new Jerusalem.

And when the last agony is over, and the citadel of life, battered by incessant assaults, yields to the great destroyer—when we view his direful ravages, and perceive the sad tokens of dissolution and decay —we are ready to burst out into despairing lamentations—as if pain and death were triumphant, and the Lord had forsaken the work of his hands. Oh, it is all that mortal man can bear, to see the beloved form lying in ruins, about to be consigned to the dismal grave, and there forsaken to moulder into dust. That heart which throbbed with love, melted in sympathy and glowed with devotion—now chilled and senseless. Those eyes—which sparkled with affection, beamed with devotion, and overflowed in tenderness —closed in darkness. Those dear hands—ever active in every good work, ever open in duty and kindness—clasped in death. That beloved countenance —so oft bedewed with tears of compassion, so often brightened with a holy joy—occupied by the pale ensigns of mortality. It is in the midst of such scenes, that the firmest christian falters, and needs support from above, to preserve him from being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. And yet on such occasions, our overpowering distress arises from

our seeing but in part. The dark shades of the picture meet our view; while its bright and dazzling beauties are concealed. We see the forsaken and desolate tenement—but not the glad spirit ascending in rapture to the throne of God. We see the sad habiliments of the grave—but not the glittering crown, the white robe, the palm of victory, the Angel's lyre, with which the new inhabitant of heaven is already adorned. We hear the voice of weeping and mourning—but we do not hear the seraphic praises of the upper temple, in which the glorified spirit is sweetly joining.

It is thus fully evident, that all that is necessary to alleviate the sorrows, and support the fainting hearts of bereaved christians, is to strengthen their faith, and assist them to look beyond the gloomy clouds which surround them, and behold the glorious destinies of those who die in the Lord. This the Apostle effects, by suggesting considerations of thrilling interest and glorious import. *They sleep.* A most expressive and consoling description of the quietness and safety in which the bodies of departed saints rest in the grave, when the toils and sorrows of life are over. They could find no state of undisturbed repose in life. This was not their rest. It was a scene of warfare against spiritual foes—of striving against the current of sinful nature—of labouring amid temptations and trials. But now the combat is over. Sin and Satan are finally vanquished. And the feeble flesh, worn out by its weary pilgrimage, lies down in peaceful slumber, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary

are at rest. *They sleep in Jesus.* Their bodies are not neglected or forgotten; but are under the Redeemer's protecting care and watchful love. He entered the tomb himself, that he might sanctify and honour that gloomy dwelling-place of his children. While to the eye of sense they seem utterly cast away; faith beholds them encircled by the guardianship of Omnipotence. The body of the christian is precious in the sight of the Lord. All its members are written in his book. He has honoured it by making it the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is therefore carefully taken down, and all its essential materials preserved, refined, ennobled—to be re-edified, as "the palace of the soul," to adorn with immortal splendour, the city of God. With these views of the grave, we may commit the remains of our loveliest and dearest into its bosom, with emotions far different from those of hopeless sorrow.

Having thus assuaged the anguish which is naturally felt, in consigning the body of a beloved christian friend to the dust; the inspired Apostle directs the eye of faith to that beatific state—that bright and blessed world—where the spirits of the just made perfect, being absent from the body, are present with the Lord. He tells us that when the Redeemer shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God, to raise the dead, and judge the world; he will bring with him his departed saints, as a part of his glorious retinue, as partakers in his final triumph. Here then we have another source of rich consolation in the death of real christians. While their bodies remain in the grave,

their spirits are before the throne of God and the Lamb. They serve him day and night in his temple, and shall go no more out for ever. They have completely attained what they longed and panted for, with intense desire, here below—perfect holiness, and full communion with God. They enjoy the unclouded vision of that glory, whose faint and transient glimpses always ravished their hearts. A little while ago, they were fainting and trembling in the dark passage of mortality—agonized by the pangs of an expiring body. But suddenly the imprisoned spirit was released. All darkness and terrour, all grief and pain, are in a moment gone for ever. The scene of suffering and bitter lamentation is left behind. The glories of heaven burst upon the view; and the soul in raptured wonder, begins to enjoy what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived; even the things which God hath prepared for those who love him. View then by faith that happy spirit—so dear to your hearts, whose departure from this vale of tears has so distressed you—enjoying the presence and smiles of the Redeemer—mingling in the blessed society of holy and happy spirits—Angels and Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim—conversing with Patriarchs and Prophets, with Apostles and Martyrs—meeting, with ineffable joy, the spirits of pious friends and relatives, and children who had gone before, and renewing an intercourse of affection never again to be interrupted—contemplate this scene, the Apostle would say to mourning relatives, and dry up your tears, and prepare to follow.

But we have before us in this passage, still another view of the glorious destinies of departed saints, to cheer the drooping hearts of those who are in heaviness on account of their removal. This is the triumphant deliverance of their bodies from the dominion of the grave. When the Lord Jesus Christ shall come in glory accompanied with his mighty Angels, and with the spirits of his redeemed people, the dead in Christ shall rise first. The first care of the descending Judge shall be employed in calling forth the bodies of his children, to add to the triumph and to partake in the joys of that great day. They have seemed to be utterly forsaken. Ages have rolled away, since they mouldered into indistinguishable dust. Their monuments have crumbled into fragments, and are seen no more. Their descendants have forgotten where their ashes repose. But God has not forgotten them. His watchful eye has been fixed upon them; and now he comes to fulfil his promise, and to raise up their once vile bodies in the likeness of Christ's glorious body. At his bidding they come forth. They have passed through a wonderful transformation since they were laid in the grave. Then their poor, wasted, decaying forms excited deep commiseration. Now they appear radiant in immortal beauty, and fill all beholders with delight and admiration. With ineffable rapture, their glad spirits enter again these pure and glorified mansions. Pronounced heirs of glory, by the Eternal Judge, before an assembled universe, they now take possession of their inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

Such are the ravishing scenes, such the glorious destinies which await the faithful soul—affording strong consolation to those whose beloved friends thus sleep in Jesus. And these views of revealed truth are strikingly appropriate to the affecting solemnity of this day. We are assembled a congregation of mourners. That mysterious dispensation, which has numbered our beloved Mrs. Hibben with the dead, has thrown a deep gloom over this community, and inflicted upon many hearts the pangs of keenest grief. Far from disapproving these emotions, I feel the full weight of that calamity, which fills your hearts with anguish, and am constrained to weep with you in all the bitterness of sorrow. It becomes us not to be calm and unmoved. It would be a reproach to the Gospel. When our Heavenly Father inflicts such a cutting stroke, he means that we should feel it severely—that our very hearts should bleed beneath his hand. When he addresses to us so loud and piercing a call, his purpose is to send a trembling alarm to our inmost souls. We have cause to mourn. A most grievous calamity has fallen upon us. Our loss is inexpressibly great. The direful breach can never be repaired. A pillar in the temple of God is fallen. The light of a holy example and an elevated piety is extinguished. That life, which was spent in doing good, has come to an end. In the meridian of usefulness, in the midst of unwearied labours to promote the spiritual good of all around her—surrounded by those whom she was guiding in the way of life, and guarding from danger—she has been taken from us, and her blessed

course of piety and benevolence on earth is terminated for ever.

Under circumstances so trying and tender as those in which we, my fellow mourners, have been placed, there is danger that our affections and sympathies should be so strongly excited, as to hinder the proper effect of such a dispensation. It pleased God, in his inscrutable wisdom, to lay upon this meek sufferer such a crushing weight of pain—to prove her in such a furnace—and to cause her graces to shine forth in such a long, dark night of tribulation; that we scarcely discern the rays of divine love amid such deep gloom, or "the kind hand of a Father in the chastenings of a God." Faith alone can perceive, that such a path of suffering leads to a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It has therefore been my object, to present such a view of the blessedness of departed saints, as may hush every murmur, relieve the anguish of pitying grief, and turn away our sorrows from scenes where they are equally misapplied and unavailing, to bestow them where they are well employed, and may be most salutary.

While reason and revelation forbid us to grieve over the condition of one, who has just become a glorified spirit in heaven; it is undeniable that we have much cause to weep for ourselves and for our children. A most distressful scene of bereavement and affliction is before me. A venerable Parent has lived through years of feebleness and infirmity, to mourn over the decease of the most dutiful and faith-

ful Daughter, that ever mother was blessed with, to smooth the passage of declining age.

The sorrows of the Partner of her life and heart, no words can express. Such an affectionate union, of forty years, cannot be sundered but with heart-rending pangs, which none can know but those who feel them.

The mourning sons and daughters have lost such a mother as few ever had to lose. The numerous grand children, in the midst of their tears, little know how terrible a calamity has befallen them, or how precious were the prayers and instructions of that blessed woman, who will form their infant minds, and watch over their tender years, no more for ever.

All the relatives of the deceased, her neighbours and acquaintances, and the members of this community generally, feelingly unite in the mournful services of this occasion. Is it not indeed the spontaneous testimony of every heart in this large Congregation, that she, whose death we deplore, was one of the most amiable and excellent of women—one of the most devoted, consistent and useful of christians?

Her death is not merely a private grief; it is a publick calamity. The same stroke which has deprived this numerous family of a most dear and inestimable Mother, and converted the dwelling-place of domestick enjoyment into a house of mourning, has also cut short a career of active benevolence, and silenced a most persuasive and successful advocate in the cause of piety and holiness.

None of you, my hearers, are uninterested in this mournful event. You, who have felt the power of

renewing grace, must lament that your counsellor and guide, your faithful friend and affectionate companion in the way to heaven, is numbered with the dead. Those who are living without God in the world may well tremble at the alarming reflection, that the kind monitress, who told you of your danger, besought you to turn to God, and prayed without ceasing for your salvation, now warns and prays no longer. You who may be anxiously inquiring what you shall do to be saved, must feelingly deplore her removal, whose delight it was to instruct and encourage the awakened sinner, to lead the heavy laden soul to the Saviour's feet, and to rejoice over the penitent with an Angel's joy.

Little children, you too have cause to weep at the grave of that tender, loving friend, who never failed, whenever she saw you, to tell you of the love of Jesus, and kindly to persuade you to consecrate to him, the morning of your days. The abodes of poverty, sickness and sorrow, may send forth a voice of wailing, for she, who went not abroad but on errands of mercy—who loved to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, will visit them no more. Ah! who of us can reflect without bitter tears, that she, whose heart always overflowed with benevolence, who would at any time deny herself to supply the wants of the sick stranger, or relieve the distresses of the friendless and destitute—and who might be daily seen in the poorest Negro's cabin, ministering to the sick, comforting the aged, and pointing the disconsolate to the lamb of God—has herself sunk under the pressure of pain, disease and

death. But let us repress these vain lamentations. They cannot break that deep slumber. She will not awake, nor be raised out of her sleep, till the heavens be no more. And blessed be God, her gentle spirit feels not our sorrows. The days of her mourning are ended. Even if she be perfectly aware of all that is passing here; and clearly surveys all these distressful scenes; still, by some mysterious transformation, she is enabled to behold them without one painful emotion—without the slightest interruption of complete felicity.

Instead therefore of vainly deploring what is irretrievably lost, let us recount, with devout thankfulness, the blessings which have been ours, the peculiar mercies that we have so long been permitted to enjoy. It would be criminal ingratitude to God, should we not deeply feel and solemnly acknowledge our high obligations to his gracious Providence, for bestowing such a parent, such a friend. Far be it from me to offer to her blessed memory that customary tribute of adulation, which is more frequently designed to flatter the pride of the living, than to confer honour upon the dead. If there could be tears in heaven, she would weep over such an unhallowed offering. For while it was her special request that I should perform this service, she solemnly enjoined it upon me, that no words of praise, should be used in reference to one, so utterly unworthy in herself, and so completely indebted to divine grace, for every hope, for every consolation. Not to commemorate her virtues, did she appoint this funeral sermon, but for a higher, nobler purpose. It was that, in her name,

those solemn truths might be once more affectionately addressed to her family and friends, which she had so often personally urged upon their attention: that being dead, she might yet speak words of admonition and encouragement to all those who were dear to her in life.

I know not how this object can be more effectually attained—how religion can be more attractively recommended—how the path to heaven can be more clearly pointed out—or the christian character more strikingly delineated, than by directing your attention to the life and death of this dear departed believer. In this, we praise not the creature—but would magnify that grace which moulded her into such a conformity to the divine image, and bestowed upon her so lovely an assemblage of christian virtues. And while we present before you an example most impressive and salutary, we shall thereby preserve an imperfect portrait of one whose memory must for ever be dear to our hearts, and transmit to her descendants in after times, a precious memorial of that Ancestress, to whose piety and prayers they will owe unspeakable obligations.

In this brief delineation, we are surrounded by such an accumulation of materials, that we must select very sparingly, and omit much that is valuable. For, while the life of a retiring female, who never, but at the call of duty, passed out of the domestic circle, may appear, to many, barren of incident and tediously uniform; there is more to excite thrilling interest in the bosoms of the wise, in the history of an eminent christian's pilgrimage through this world,

than in the annals of an empire. Could we only portray her just as she was, our purpose of making a deep and lasting impression would be fully effected. But who can describe the workmanship of the Holy Ghost—those tempers, dispositions and affections which constitute real spirituality? In the case before us, as in all other similar ones, there needs no concealment, no colouring, no explanation. The naked simplicity of truth will most glorify God, and gratify every pious mind. We are not contemplating qualities which dazzle at a distance, but will not bear inspection; but the operations of God's own hand, which unfold increasing beauties, the more closely they are scrutinized.

Were we to attempt to give an account of Mrs. Hibben's religious experience, it would include the history of her life. For religion was the grand employment of her whole mortal existence. Happily was she distinguished from those, who, having sacrificed the morning and meridian of their days to the world, can only offer the dregs and fragments of their probation to their Redeemer. At the age of fifteen she became a subject of redeeming grace, and devoted herself with an undivided heart to the service of God her Saviour. Even then she gave no dubious indications of the bright career she was commencing—of the high attainments in holiness at which she arrived. Her cloudless morn afforded a happy presage of the auspicious day which succeeded. Raised up for purposes of great and lasting usefulness, she was prepared for the work that was given her to do, by an unusually clear and deep ex-

perience of the power of the Gospel. Forty years her light shone with increasing lustre, diffusing the sacred influence of a holy example. Probably the prominent traits in her christian character were humility and spirituality. Amid her high attainments in holiness and the special manifestations of divine favour, she was lowliness itself. Rich in faith, greatly honoured as an instrument of good to others, and blessed with the indwelling witness of the Spirit; her habitual feelings were those of deep self-abasement. But while she accounted herself less than the least, she was enabled almost continually to rejoice in God her Saviour. In spiritual mindedness and deadness to the world, few christians have surpassed her. Surrounded by the fascinations of prosperity and affluence, enjoying the favour and smiles of the world, she still lived as a stranger and a pilgrim, and had her conversation and affections in heaven. Her frame of mind was eminently devotional. Prayer was the element in which she lived, and moved, and had her being. It was her delight in prosperity, her solace in affliction, her refuge in temptation. The word of God was her treasure, her chosen companion. Unremittingly she searched the scriptures, and found every part of them replete with instruction and comfort. The study of the Bible was the serious, fixed employment of a considerable portion of every day, and most of its sacred contents were engraved upon her memory as well as her heart. Thus rooted and grounded in faith, she abounded in the fruits of holiness. In the cause of Christ, in the performance of duty, she was active and decided. To

promote the spiritual good of all her friends and neighbours, was an object of intense desire and unwearied effort. Her visits were almost always visits of mercy and faithfulness. When she went about, it was like the blessed Redeemer, doing good. Where was the scene of distress within her reach, that she did not seek to alleviate—the sick bed or the house of mourning which she neglected? Of all those who enjoyed her company and conversation it may be confidently asserted, that if they are not better for it to all eternity, it will be their own fault. In all her social intercourse, her heart was intent upon promoting the spiritual welfare of all. For each she had a word in season, in the meekness of wisdom. Humble and retiring by nature as the sweet flower of the forest, yet in doing her Master's will she had the unwavering decision, the glowing zeal of a martyr.

The sanctuary of publick worship was dear to her. It was always with a gladdened heart that she heard it said, come let us go up to the house of the Lord. How often in this place has the preacher's eye rested with sacred delight upon her devout and placid countenance, in yonder seat now vacant; with the comforting reflection, that there was at least one heart lifted up in fervent supplication.

The piety of Mrs. Hibben was not gloomy and forbidding. There was nothing of austerity or sourness in her manners or conversation. On the contrary, she had a winning cheerfulness and a constant flow of kindly feeling. Happy herself, she diffused happiness all around her. No heart could be more alive to the enjoyments of domestic life, or more filled

with affection and tenderness towards her family and friends. It was here that the crowning excellence of her character was displayed. While in the publick duties of religion, and in her intercourse with society, she was eminently exemplary and useful; it was at home that the treasures of her heart were fully unfolded—it was on the domestick altar that the fire of devotion burned with unclouded brightness. The care of her children's souls was the great business of her life. In affectionate fidelity to their eternal interest—in prayerful solicitude and untiring labours for their spiritual good, she evinced an earnest devotedness, a complete self-consecration. Witness that chamber, where for many years she daily carried her children to a throne of grace, and kneeling down in the midst of them, poured forth her ardent supplications for their salvation: and that closet of private intercession, whence ascended continually the most fervent prayers, accompanied by strong cries and tears, that they might become the subjects of renewing grace. Upon this she had fixed her whole heart. In this she felt as if she could not be denied. In all their temporal allotments, she could readily submit to trials and disappointments. But her importunate petition was —Oh that their souls may live before thee.

O ye, whose blessed privilege it was to call her mother—whose infant minds were formed by such a care—whose first ideas were imbibed from such lips—whose tender years were passed under such a guardianship: Bethink yourselves of your high responsibility, of the fruitfulness which will be required of those who have been planted in such a garden of

the Lord. Who can estimate the precious birth-right which has been yours? To be born heir to a great estate is frequently a curse. But to be born of such a mother is the richest boon, the most blessed inheritance, that can be bestowed. It is to commence life in the very vestibule of heaven; to begin the conflict within reach of the victor's crown. Permit me affectionately and solemnly to remind you, that it depends upon the faithful improvement of the counsels and instructions, which you have received from those maternal lips, now silent in the grave, whether your distinguished privileges shall be a source of ineffable joy, or inconceivable anguish, through the whole of an infinite duration. As the endearing ties, which once united you to that beloved parent who is now, we fully believe, a glorified spirit in heaven, are dissolved for ever; the only re-union, to which you can look forward, is that which must result from your following her footsteps in the same path, being partakers in like precious faith, imbibing the same spirit, and being prepared by grace for the blissful employments and holy society, into which she is already entered.

The parental office has an importance transcending all human comprehension. It embraces the grand interests of time and eternity. All its duties are connected with the destinies of immortals; and the manner in which they are discharged must do great good or cause great evil in this world—must brighten the glories of heaven, or deepen the darkness of the pit, in the world to come.

For this sphere of action Mrs. Hibben was doubtless raised up, and eminently qualified by Providence. In forming the minds of children—in making early and deep impressions of religious truth—in repressing the natural feelings of selfishness, anger and stubbornness—in cultivating mildness of temper, tenderness of heart, and docility in receiving instruction—and in acquiring and maintaining an influence over the youthful mind, the most gentle and yet the most absolute—she exhibited an exquisite skill and was favoured with uncommon success. The vineyard, in which she laboured so long and so diligently, and over which she watched with such trembling solicitude, did not disappoint her hopes, nor fail to recompense her toil. She enjoyed some precious fruits of her faithful exertions. Some tender plants, which she had nurtured by her prayers, and watered with tears, became trees of the Lord bearing the fruits of holiness. She experienced the fulfilment of the divine promises to parental faithfulness. She went for years to the Lord's table with four of her daughters. She lived to bestow her blessing upon seventeen grand children, and to train up several of them in the ways of piety. And hers also was the singular felicity of being surrounded by a most peaceful, harmonious and affectionate family.

Thus faithfully and successfully has the great purpose, for which this beloved woman was sent into the world, been accomplished. Her work was done, and the plaudit has been uttered—well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

This view of the life and character of Mrs. HIBBEN is indeed a brief and imperfect sketch. It is a mere outline, which all who were intimately acquainted can fill up readily and satisfactorily. Far removed from all pretension to talents or eminence, shrinking from all distinction and applause, her goodness was only known where it might not be concealed—her pious influence, like a hidden fountain, was only manifested by the moral verdure it occasioned. Many of the poor and destitute must now have discovered their benefactress by the failure of supplies which had been secretly bestowed. I cannot conclude my remarks upon the christian character under review, without recording a personal testimony which I feel constrained to give. After an intimate knowledge of Mrs. HIBBEN for nearly twenty years, which it has been my privilege and happiness to enjoy, it is my deliberate judgment—that, in love to the cause of Christ, and earnest desires and unwearied efforts for the salvation of souls—for habitual heavenly-mindedness and spirituality—for holiness of life, conversation and temper—for kindness and liberality to the afflicted and destitute—for affectionate faithfulness in her domestick relations—and in walking humbly with God in a life of prayer and holy communion—I have never witnessed higher attainments in piety, or more complete demonstration, that the life she lived in the flesh, she lived by faith in the Son of God.

While, my afflicted friends, we thus contemplate the varied excellence of her who was so deservedly dear to us, we feel the painful conviction, that the

same recollections which produce an undoubting confidence in her happiness, present most affectingly to view the invaluable blessings we have lost in her removal. The precious treasure was contained in an earthen vessel, which is broken, and the treasure is ours no longer. We have surveyed the course of her earthly pilgrimage; let us now approach the dark valley and behold its termination. The scene, though deeply distressing, will not disappoint our high expectations; it is in unison with the views we have already taken. As her life was an uniform and most impressive display of the nature and effects of genuine christianity; so her death was undoubtedly designed to evince the mighty efficacy of faith, in supporting the soul amid severe and accumulated sufferings. For wise purposes, she was for many months laid upon the bed of disease and weakness, and, during all that time, was called to endure almost continual pains, of the most severe and agonizing description. It was during this long protracted illness, that patience had its perfect work, and all the graces of the christian character were most strikingly displayed. Had she departed suddenly, or after a short illness, there could not have been afforded so signal an example of "glorifying God in the fire," so affecting and alarming a lesson to the thoughtless on the value and necessity of true religion, or so precious an illustration of the power and efficacy of sustaining grace. Such, indeed, were the manifestations of divine love, the vigorous exercise of faith, the clear perception of the wisdom and goodness of all God's dealings, with which she was favoured,

that she was enabled to declare, that she had enjoyed more real happiness, more blissful foretastes of heaven, during that half year of pain and languishment, than in any other portion of her life. She had certainly attained a high degree of sanctification. Expressions of thankfulness and praise to God were almost constantly upon her lips, and she seemed for months to have no other feelings or emotions but those of devotion to God, and overflowing affection and kindness to all around her. Instead of uttering complaints and recounting her suffering to those who visited her sick chamber; her heart was bent upon speaking a word in season to promote their spiritual good. Every opportunity was eagerly embraced, to encourage and animate christians to greater diligence and devotedness, and to beseech the unconverted, with all the affectionate energy of a dying believer, to flee from the coming wrath, and be reconciled to God. Even the little children of the neighbourhood were sent for to her bedside, when her dissolution was daily expected, that she might tell them of a Saviour's love, and invite them to his arms.

The closing scene was calm and peaceful. Her work on earth was done. Life had been employed in setting her house in order—in diligent preparation, for the day of death. Its arrival, therefore, produced no alarm or consternation. No frenzied efforts were to be made to accomplish the grand business of life on a dying bed; or to fulfil neglected duties or redeem wasted time, when the midnight cry was already heard. She was found watching and waiting, with her lamp trimmed and burning. She had finished

commanding her children. The final counsels had been given. The commendatory prayer, resigning the charge of their souls into the hands of God, had been offered up. On the banks of Jordan, she tranquilly expected the summons. Death still had its terrors. Feeble nature shrunk from the unknown pangs, the fearful struggles of an expiring body. She was afraid to die, but she longed to be dead. Beyond the dark passage, all was bright and cloudless. Her assurance was unshaken that, when the terrible shock, which she apprehended from the fall of the earthly tabernacle, should be over, she should have an abundant entrance into her Father's kingdom, with exceeding and everlasting joy. And in the midst of her solicitude, lest her strength should fail, and her prayers, that she might be borne through the trying scene, she fell quietly asleep, and awoke to consciousness no more, till her disembodied spirit was ushered into the immediate presence of her God and Saviour. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them.

While thus reviewing these solemn, tender scenes, let us, my fellow mourners, treasure up in our hearts the instructions and admonitions we have received, and cherish an affectionate remembrance of the striking example of christian character, in life and in death, which has been set before us. The only means, which now remain to us of evincing our love and gratitude to the departed, must be found in following her example, and obeying her counsels. Do we shudder at an eternal separation?—let us be assur-

ed that it is only by the washing of regeneration and the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost—only by a life of penitence, self-denial and holiness—only by being faithful unto death—that we can hope for admission into the blessed society above. Let us then take heed to ourselves, that we be the followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises; that we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, while it is called to-day—knowing that the night cometh wherein no man can work.

FINIS.